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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 001649

SIPDIS

AF/W FOR CALLI FULLER
AF/RSA FOR MIKE BITTRICK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/23/2013
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LI](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: CHAMBAS: BLUE HAT ECOMIL; MODEL COOPERATING;
BRYANT PREPARED; TAYLOR'S INFLUENCE DIMINISHING

REF: ABUJA 1639

CLASSIFIED BY CDA ROGER MEECE FOR REASONS 1.5 (b) AND (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: ECOWAS ExecSec Chambas advocated to the Charge September 19 and in a meeting of COMs September 22 that ECOMIL should become part of the UN's peacekeeping force after the October 1 handover. Chambas also commented that recent conversations with MODEL leaders led him to believe they were trying to adhere to the ceasefire, but communications problems have hampered their command and control. He said incoming National Transition Government for Liberia (NTGL) Chairman Gyude Bryant is becoming comfortable with his role as "umpire and ombudsman," while Charles Taylor is less and less able to influence events from his Nigerian exile. END SUMMARY.

LIBERIA PEACEKEEPING

¶2. (C) In his conversation with the CDA on September 19, Chambas said ECOWAS anticipated that the U.N. would not be prepared to take over the PKO by October 1, and advocated that the ECOMIL force in Liberia be "blue helmeted" on October 1. He said this would be a topic of discussion at the September 24 Liberia Contact Group meeting in New York.

¶3. (C) Noting that he planned to meet with a delegation from MODEL later that afternoon, Chambas said his recent conversations with MODEL leaders lead him to believe it is making an honest effort to abide by the cease-fire agreement, but that communications problems prevented the MODEL leadership from exercising firm command and control. Indeed, Chambas maintained the lack of adequate communications still presented an obstacle to uniform observance of the cease-fire by all parties, commenting that even some fighters loyal to former President Taylor were unaware he had left Liberia.

BRYANT IS COMFORTABLE WITH HIS ROLE

¶4. (C) Citing initial confusion over the extent of incoming NTGL Chairman Gyude Bryant's powers, Chambas said he and Bryant had since discussed the transition in detail and Bryant was now comfortable with his role as "umpire and ombudsman." Apparently, some of Bryant's advisors had advocated a more robust role for the NTGL Chairman, but Chambas said everyone now understood that Bryant's place was to be more of a mediator between the factions represented in the NTGL than a chief executive.

WHILE CHARLES TAYLOR'S IS WANING

¶5. (C) Chambas commented that while former Liberian President Charles Taylor still had close ties with supporters in Liberia, he was less and less able to influence events there. Citing the intention of Taylor's former Vice President, Moses Blah, to hand over power to the NTGL on October 14, Chambas said there was little Taylor could do from his Nigerian exile to prevent the NTGL from taking power or to disrupt the eventual transition to democracy in Liberia. Nevertheless, Chambas thought Taylor would continue to try to influence Liberian politics and that his activities should be closely monitored.

MEECE